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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/69, commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity.

2. The General Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.

3. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-third session on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

4. In this connection, a note verbale dated 30 January 2018 was sent to all Member States, requesting their views on the subject. To date, replies from the Governments of Algeria, Greece, Lebanon and Peru have been received and are reproduced in section II below. A reply from the European Union has been received and is reproduced in section III below. Any replies received after 15 May 2018 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (www.un.org/disarmament) in the original language received. No addenda will be issued.

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[15 May 2018]

The problem of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region must be seen in a global context, one that takes account of the human, political, security and economic interests and concerns of the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean, by promoting initiatives designed to make the region a zone of lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

Algeria has an active Mediterranean policy, based on the principles of friendship and cooperation, good neighbourliness and mutual respect. It calls for the promotion and implementation of these principles.

For Algeria, Mediterranean security and development are closely linked to peace, security and development in Africa. Algeria stresses the importance of integrating the Mediterranean dimension in the consideration of the future of the security system in Europe, with a view to safeguarding the interests of all concerned. It is on this basis that Algeria takes an active role in several initiatives and forums for dialogue established in the region:

(a) The Algerian initiative to combat terrorism in the Sahel is designed to confront the current worrisome situation, whose effects on security and stability in Africa are considerable. It is designed to strengthen the strategic, operational and military framework, launch socioeconomic development programmes, and build the

administrative, technical and operational capacities of the security personnel of several African countries;

(b) The Western Mediterranean Forum (5+5 Dialogue) has fostered the adoption of cooperation measures in several areas, the consolidation of collective peace and security in the Mediterranean, and engagement with the issues affecting peace and security in the region;

(c) The regional office of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative for the North African and Sahel region aims to promote cooperation among the countries of the region, on the one hand, and of the European Union, on the other, to reduce the risks arising from the illicit use of sensitive materials;

(d) The African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism makes important contributions with regard to combating terrorism and related topics. It is an outgrowth of the desire of African States to coordinate their efforts to implement concrete, urgent and collective counter-terrorism measures with those of the international community;

(e) The African Police Cooperation Organization (AFRIPOL) is a tool of regional coordination whose purpose is to strengthen peace and security in Africa by building the capacities of the police forces of African countries in the areas of scientific policing, criminal threat assessment, combating cybercrime and combating the illicit traffic in arms and drugs, as well as consolidating the police forces deployed in connection with peacekeeping operations;

(f) There have been significant developments in the country's cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In 2014, an individual partnership and cooperation programme was concluded with a view to strengthening the existing frameworks of cooperation between Algeria and Europe;

(g) The informal high-level strategic dialogue between Algeria and the European Union on regional security and counter-terrorism seeks to explore opportunities to develop practical cooperation in order to address the challenges posed by terrorism and deradicalization with a view to, inter alia, implementing partnership priorities concluded with the European Union. This forum reflects the country's policy of providing assistance and sharing its experience of combating terrorism and violent extremism with its partners.

Greece

[Original: English]
[15 May 2018]

A. Regional cooperation

Greece undertook targeted initiatives, launching the Rhodes Conference for Security and Stability in September 2016, the second of which was held on 22 and 23 May 2017 and the third of which was to be held on 21 and 22 June 2018, the Athens Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East in October 2015, the second of which was held in November 2017, and the Ancient Civilizations Forum in April 2017. Greece also established trilateral schemes of cooperation among countries of the Mediterranean region, notably Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. All the above emanate from our firm belief in proposing a positive and manifold agenda of cooperation, focusing on

developing synergies and joint activities in the fields of culture, trade, education and research.

The "spirit of Rhodes" provides an appropriate response to multiple challenges facing the wider Eastern Mediterranean region, thus enhancing regional security and development, as well as mutual trust and understanding among the participants. Greece has twice convened (in 2015 and 2017), as mentioned above, the Athens Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East, recognizing the urgency of communicating the message of cooperation and peace and of working on concrete alternative actions aimed at fighting radicalization that leads to violence. These conferences dealt with the urgent humanitarian crisis currently faced by religious communities and cultural entities in the region, caused by ongoing conflicts, tensions and extremism. The Centre for Religious Pluralism in the Middle East was subsequently established.

B. Security in the Euro-Mediterranean region

The Union for the Mediterranean is a fundamental platform in the Mediterranean neighbourhood. Considering the many political, security and economic challenges faced by the region, the road map, as adopted by the Union members in January 2017, signals their commitment to enhance cooperation in order to find common responses to those challenges. The road map (which includes enhancing political dialogue, ensuring the contribution of Union activities to regional stability and human development, strengthening regional integration and consolidating the capacity of the Union for action) is the testimony of Union members' will to support the work of this platform and invest in the region's growth, stability and security. "Soft" security issues — youth, education, women's empowerment, tourism and intercultural and interfaith dialogue — have been taken on board by the Union members. Reinforcing human capital, a key for stability and security in the region, through ensuring opportunities for all has also become one of its top priorities.

C. Non-proliferation and disarmament

If all States in the region of the Middle East became parties to the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, this would be a significant confidence- and security-building measure, as Greece firmly believes. Greece supports the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions of the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference. Through dialogue, stakeholders can reach a common understanding on convening a conference (on a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East), attended by all States of the Middle East on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided at the 2010 Review Conference.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[15 May 2018]

Lebanon complies with the resolutions of the United Nations and is cooperating to combat terrorism, transnational crime, the illegal transport of weapons and the illegal production, consumption and trafficking of drugs around the world and, in particular, in the Mediterranean region.

Lebanon stresses the need for action to curb illegal collective migration caused by the events unfolding in the region. Such migration has negative repercussions from every point of view, particularly security.

Peru

[Original: Spanish]
[15 May 2018]

Cooperation is the natural and necessary way to develop relations among States on the Mediterranean sea. The ongoing conflicts in the area have consistently hampered integration and effective cooperation among Mediterranean countries.

Peruvian foreign policy is based on the five strategic objectives and 31 State policies enshrined in the National Accord, particularly the sixth policy. The latter reaffirms the Government's commitment to pursuing a foreign policy conducive to peace, democracy and development by ensuring that Peru is suitably integrated in the world and international markets. Such action should respect the principles and norms of international law. It should take place in the context of inter-institutional dialogue encompassing political organizations and civil society.

General Assembly resolution 72/69 is therefore consistent with the sixth policy of the National Accord, which establishes seven core objectives that are linked to the main concerns of our foreign policy. These include promoting a climate of peace and security at the global, hemispheric, regional and subregional levels with a view to creating an environment that is stable and builds confidence. Such an environment is necessary in order to facilitate the development of our countries and the eradication of poverty. Particular emphasis will therefore be placed on reducing the build-up of arms and promoting disarmament in Latin America.

III. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]
[14 May 2018]

The strengthening of security and internal regional cooperation in the Mediterranean, as well as in the broad Middle East, remains high on the European agenda.

Cooperation was reinforced through relevant regional organizations, especially through the Union for the Mediterranean, whose strategic importance as a key platform for dialogue and as a mechanism to strengthen regional and social cohesion in the Mediterranean was also reiterated in the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. A number of high-level meetings were conducted in pursuit of the European Union's goal of strong engagement with Mediterranean partners with a view to an increasingly effective partnership within the context of the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy. The European Neighbourhood Policy review and the 2017 joint communication on a strategic approach to resilience in the European Union's external action proposed concrete measures to reinforce partners' resilience against global challenges and threats, such as supporting the development and growth of the poorest areas, countering the terrorist threat and violent extremism, as well as supporting security sector reform and border management in the context of the rule of law. The Common Foreign and Security Policy missions and operations in the region also play an important role in achieving this goal.

Where possible, the European Union cooperated with Southern Mediterranean and Middle East countries on political, economic, security and civil society tracks. The European Union stepped up its engagement in favour of countries that are implementing political and economic reforms, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. This translated into enhanced political dialogue, significant European Union financial assistance, agreement on priorities for partnerships and progress in key policy areas. Cooperation with the Southern partners on tackling terrorism and preventing radicalization leading to violent extremism has been strengthened.

Security and counter-terrorism dialogues and high-level visits have been conducted in the region, specifically in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Turkey, leading to concrete results, and an informal high-level dialogue with Algeria has been launched. Counter-terrorism and security experts have been deployed in European Union delegations in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, with the direct support of member States, to contribute to a better situational awareness of local context and to define targeted, evidence-based cooperation programmes. They also act as a reference point for matters related to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism for local and international counterparts, for example in donor coordination platforms or at Global Counterterrorism Forum meetings.

On 6 March, the European Union and Tunisia signed an administrative arrangement to boost cooperation in civil protection and disaster risk management. This is the second time that an administrative arrangement has been signed with a country from the southern neighbourhood of the European Union, following the agreement with Algeria in December 2016.

The European Union is supporting Libya's political transition to a stable and functioning country, including the United Nations-led mediation efforts, through an integrated approach. The European Union underlines the importance of inclusiveness of the political process and Libyan ownership, notably through the participation of all legitimate Libyan stakeholders. The European Union is also supporting Libyan authorities through its Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations, the European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean and the European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya.

The European Union maintained its position as the region's largest donor and foreign aid provider.

In 2017, the migratory situation became more stable but remained challenging, in particular with regard to the Eastern Mediterranean route. Migration continues to be a top priority for the European Union and its partners in the region. The decrease in irregular arrivals to Europe has been confirmed throughout 2017 and the first months of 2018, while work is ongoing to save lives, tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, protect Europe's external borders and further strengthen cooperation with international partners in the Mediterranean region and beyond. The principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility from the Valetta summit in Malta in November 2015 will continue to guide the response of the European Union and African partners.

The implementation of the European Union-Turkey statement continues to deliver results in reducing irregular and dangerous crossings and in saving lives in the Aegean Sea. The European Union remains seized of the matter, given the ongoing and increased flows from Turkey. The number of people being helped to leave Libya has increased significantly since the joint African Union-European Union-United Nations Task Force was established.

Joint efforts will continue to be made to evacuate migrants in detention and put an end to the dire conditions in which they are held, as well as to dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks.

The European Union emergency trust fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa continues to play a critical role in the European Union's work. In total, the fund has now approved 147 programmes across its three windows, the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and North Africa, for a total of more than €2.5 billion, with contracts signed for just over €1.5 billion. The External Investment Plan and its European Fund for Sustainable Development have also generated strong interest from partner financial institutions. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency is currently supporting national border guards with 1,350 deployed experts along all migratory routes.

The European Union continues to address the root causes of migration, such as instability, through its Common Security and Defence Policy missions in the Sahel region, and it combats traffickers' networks and implements the United Nations arms embargo through the European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean.

The European Union has been an active participant in the Geneva-based International Syria Support Group task forces and actively supports the implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), notably in relation to humanitarian access, cessation of hostilities leading to a ceasefire and supporting the United Nations-led political process. The European Union supported the United Nations-led efforts and played its part in supporting the intra-Syria talks, as well as in supporting regional countries that are hosting millions of Syrian refugees. The European Union hosted the second Brussels conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region, co-chaired with the United Nations, with representatives of more than 70 countries, in April 2018. In addition to the humanitarian pledges, it focused on reiterating its support to the United Nations-led intra-Syrian political talks. A first tracking report of pledges from the first Brussels conference, published in October 2017, showed that 88 per cent of grants pledged for 2017 had been committed by donors at that time. Since 2013, the European Union has contributed approximately €23 million to the dismantling of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

The European Union has joined the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the African Union to form the Libya Quartet, with the objective of contributing to the efforts of finding a solution to the crisis.

As participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union member States foster cooperation and dialogue on wider security issues through the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation programme with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Priority areas in this forum include countering radicalization and terrorism, border security, migration management and non-discrimination.

Political dialogue has been further intensified with regional partners, such as the League of Arab States. Under the European Union-League of Arab States Strategic Dialogue, launched in November 2015, two additional working groups, one on fighting transnational organized crime and the other on international migration, have been added to those already existing on counter-terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, crisis management, early warning and crisis response and humanitarian assistance. So far, those working groups have focused on policy dialogues and exchanges of best practices. The European Union-League of Arab States ministerial meeting, held in Cairo in December 2016, confirmed the joint work programme, which puts an emphasis on activities related to crisis management, civil society, human rights, diplomacy, electoral observation and increased participation of women

in economic development. The European Union also seeks to work with the Gulf States in addressing challenges in the region, such as those in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and the Horn of Africa.

The European Union's cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has gained new impetus with the successful co-organization of a high-level event on anti-Muslim discrimination and hatred, in New York in January 2016, and the first European Union-Organization of Islamic Cooperation meeting of senior officials, held in Brussels in February 2017.